

The Basic Tenets of Invitational Theory and Practice: An Invitational Glossary

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Abstract

A review of the literature which concentrates on Invitational Theory and Practice (ITP) has revealed an inconsistent and oft times confusing or contradictory use of named concepts, labels, phrases, wordings, definitions, and other such titles of major ITP principles (Shaw and Siegel, 2010). Presented in a glossary type format, the purpose of this article is to identify and define the basic tenets of Invitational Theory and Practice (ITP). Additionally, this glossary is proposed as the accepted standard for the various concepts and terminologies used to describe and or explain ITP in a consistent manner for application across a variety of disciplines and settings.

Overview

ITP is viewed as the overarching theory for the base paradigm known as Invitational Education (IE). IE is seen as having its philosophical/theoretical roots arising from a variety of humanistic models of human behavior. These models of teaching/education and counseling are intellectually grounded in the work of John Dewey, Sidney Jourard, Kurt Lewin, Abraham Maslow, Art Combs, among others. The phrase “Invitational Education” first appeared in the writings of Purkey (1978) concerning itself with an approach to teaching and learning focusing on a global methodology to enhance the self-concepts of learners. Since that first appearance, the model of IE has evolved within the writings of many authors, in particular; Purkey and Novak (1984, 1988, 1996, 2008), Purkey and Schmidt (1987, 1990, 1996, 2010), Purkey and Stanley (1991), Purkey and Siegel (2002), and Novak (1992, 1994, 2002). With each publication, the description, explanation, and application of ITP expanded and changed as a result of newer perspectives, shifting needs of education, societal expectations/norms, and attempts by the writers to reach a wider audience with subtle modifications in wording, examples, and metaphors. ITP represents a qualitative perspective on human affective and cognitive processes. Consequently ITP both suffers and benefits from its inherent fluidity.

The references cited at the end of this manuscript, represent the main sources from which the authors “pulled together” the proposed standardized terminology. It is important to note that the terms and concepts as presented herein exemplify the most salient aspects of ITP as determined by the authors.

Limitations

We recognize that the selection of these terms and the assignment of the definitions, examples, and explanations used, did not undergo any empirical methodology or procedure. The process was simple consensus among the authors. We welcome other supporters of ITP to assist in the enhancement and advancing of this work.

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A Glossary of the Basic Tenets of Invitational Theory and Practice

Application Processes (see Appendix B)

Dimensions (AKA “Four Corner Press”)

Domains (AKA “The 5 P’s”)

Choices

Styles

Artfully Inviting

The skill achieved when one has integrated the process of inviting to the level where the behavior appears to be effortless and the sender does not seek recognition; related to “styles”.

Basic Assumptions of ITP

1. People are able, valuable, and capable of self-direction, and should be treated accordingly.
2. Helping is a cooperative, collaborative alliance in which process is as important as product.
3. People possess relatively untapped potential in all areas of human development.
4. Human potential can best be realized by places, policies, and programs that are intentionally designed to invite development, and by people who consistently seek to realize this potential in themselves and others, personally and professionally.

Care

See **Elements**

Choices

In the application of invitational behavior it is acknowledged that individuals have choices to be respected regarding invitations.

Sending

Not sending

Accepting

Not accepting

Conflict Resolution (AKA The Six Powerful C's)

Handling difficult situations between people through a series of six steps:

- Concern: Identify the concern and decide whether it needs to be addressed.
- Confer: Initiate a non-threatening, informal conversation to resolve the concern.
- Consult: Talk directly, seriously and more formally requesting resolution.
- Confront: Explain again the original concern and discuss the logical consequences.
- Combat: Take sustained action with logical consequences.
- Conciliate: Seek to restore a non-combative relationship to reach permanent resolution.

Democratic Ethos

A fundamental belief of ITP; Democracy is a social ideal based on the belief that all people matter and can grow through participation in self-governance.

Dimensions (AKA The Four Corner Press)

The object and target of an invitation directed at oneself or others either personally or professionally. The object is self or others and the target is personally or professionally.

- Inviting Self Personally: Seeking a balanced lifestyle for oneself.
- Inviting Others Personally: Seeking a balanced lifestyle for others.
- Inviting Self Professionally: Encouraging oneself to continually learn and explore.
- Inviting Others Professionally: Encouraging others to continually learn and explore.

Disinvitation

An act which offers a negative or destructive intent. A communication, by which the sender seeks to enroll the receiver in the negative vision of the sender; something destructive for adoption. ITP is further described with illustrating the polar opposite of variables that have an inviting quality with examples of those lacking in the invitational character. (See Appendix C)

Domains (AKA The Five P's)

Inviting behavior can be developed in the five following areas:

- People: Human beings.
- Places: The physical environment in which people typically interact.
- Policies: The rules, codes, and procedures used to regulate the ongoing functions of organizations.
- Programs: Organized activities that have a specific purpose or goal.
- Processes: A systematic series of actions directed to some end.

Elements (TROCI)

Trust: Thoughts, behaviors and beliefs based on reliability, consistency, personal authenticity, and honesty.

Respect: A belief that all people are valuable, able and responsible and should be treated accordingly.

Optimism: An expectation of positive, realistic outcomes for self and others.

Care: To demonstrate concern by sharing warmth, empathy, positive regard, and interest in others, specifically with the intention to help them reach their potential.

Intentionality: A belief underlying behavior with a purposeful direction and aim.

Foundations of ITP

Democratic Ethos

Perceptual Tradition

Self-Concept Theory

Basic Assumptions

Four Corner Press

The process of applying the Dimensions of ITP to enrich one's life. This process is seen as dynamic in that different levels of emphasis that may be given to any one or combination of these dimensions in one's life and any particular point. The goal in applying this process is to achieve a balance or harmony and a vibrancy where each area interacts and works in concert with each other.

Helix, The

"The Helix" graphically illustrates how an individual adopts and applies ITP. An individual's cognitive process spirals upward from awareness, to understanding, to application, and then to adoption of ITP. (See Appendix D)

Intentionality

See **Elements**

Invitation

An act which offers something beneficial for consideration. Ideally it is an intentional and caring act of communication, by which the sender seeks to enroll the receiver in the positive vision of the sender; something beneficial offered for consideration.

Invitational Education

1. An approach for authentically creating and sustaining welcoming learning environments intentionally based on trust, respect, optimism, and care, for increased learning outcomes and personal growth.
2. Invitational Education is an ethical way of creating welcome learning environments based on trust, respect, optimism, care, and intentionality

Invitational Practice

Intentionally addressing the total culture/environment of an organization to provide a more exciting, satisfying and enriching experience for all stakeholders.

Inviting Stance

The consistent position one takes and maintains to intentionally promote trust, respect, optimism, and care, in human affairs.

Invitational Theory and Practice (ITP)

An ethical theory of practice based on a set of congruent assumptions, descriptions, and prescriptions about human thinking and behavior that intentionally addresses the total culture/environment of an organization to provide a more welcoming, satisfying and enriching experience for all involved. ITP focuses on increasing the authentically personal and professional verbal and non-verbal messages that seek to bring forth the best of human potential through, trust, respect, optimism, care, and intentionality.

Invitational Model

See Appendices B and E.

Levels of Functioning (AKA: The Ladder)

The four hierarchical levels of human behavior involving both intentionality and invitations:

Intentionally Disinviting: Purposeful behavior that injures or disrupts the positive nature/potential of others and impedes beneficial outcomes

Unintentionally Disinviting: Accidental or unplanned behavior that injures or disrupts the positive nature/potential of others and impedes beneficial outcomes

Unintentionally Inviting: Accidental or unplanned behavior that enhances the positive nature/potential of others and facilitates beneficial outcomes

Intentionally Inviting: Purposeful behavior that enhances the positive nature/potential of others and facilitates beneficial outcomes

Optimism

See **Elements**

Outcomes

Beneficial Presence: Ideally, when ITP is appropriately applied, the predicted result on the self and others attains a level of growth or enrichment.

Lethal Presence: When disinventions play a dominant role, it is predicted that the impact is one that discourages or impedes positive growth thus resulting in an impoverished environment.

Perceptual Field

How one views one self, others, and the world based on past and present experiences as well as projections for the future.

Perceptual Tradition

The tenants of a variety of psychological and philosophical schools of thought (George Kelly, Gordon Allport, Sidney Jourard, Kurt Lewin, Abraham Maslow, Art Combs, Carl Rogers, etc.) consolidated into a congruent framework postulating that all behavior, without exception, is determined by the perceptual field of the behaving organism at the moment of action.

Respect

See **Elements**

Self-concept

The mental image one holds true of one's personal characteristics, significance, and identity.

Starfish Analogy, The

A metaphor that illustrates how Invitational Practice involves acting on all five domains in a patient and systematic fashion similar to the rotating method used by a starfish to open a powerfully closed oyster. (See Appendix A)

Styles

The process of behaving invitingly or unininvitingly is described by four distinct styles:

Visibly Inappropriate: The easily noticed, purposeful, and overt act of being disinviting.

Invisibly Inappropriate: The not easily noticed, purposeful, and covert act of being disinviting.

Visibly Appropriate: The easily noticed, purposeful, and overt act of being inviting.

Invisibly Appropriate: The not easily noticed, purposeful, and covert act of being inviting.

Trust

See **Elements**

Whispering Self, The

The internal dialogue that is both a speaker and a listener; a potent force for good or ill, guiding and controlling human behavior; the whispering self can encourage or discourage.

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